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## THE PULPIT AND THE PEW.

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THE priest is dead for the Protestant world. Luther's inkstand did not kill the devil, but it killed *him*, at least for us. He is a loss in many respects to be regretted. He kept alive the spirit of reverence. He was looked up to as possessing qualities superhuman in their nature, and so was competent to be the stay of the weak and their defense against the strong. If one end of religion is to make men happier in this world as well as in the next, mankind lost a great source of happiness when the priest was reduced to the common level of humanity, and became only a minister. Priest, which was *presbyter*, corresponded to senator, and was a title to respect and honor. Minister is but the diminutive of *magister*, and implies an obligation to render service.

It was promised to the first preachers that in proof of their divine mission they should have the power of casting out devils and talking in strange tongues; that they should handle serpents and drink poisons with impunity; that they should lay hands on the sick and they should recover. The Roman Church claims some of these powers for its clergy and its sacred objects to this day. Miracles, it is professed, are wrought by them, or through them, as in the days of the apostles. Protestantism proclaims that the age of such occurrences as the apostles witnessed is past. What does it know about miracles? It knows a great many *records* of miracles, but this is a different kind of knowledge.

The minister may be revered for his character, followed for his eloquence, admired for his learning, loved for his amiable qualities, but he can never be what the priest was in past ages, and is still, in the Roman Church. Dr. Arnold's definition may be found fault with, but it has a very real meaning. "The essential point in the notion of a priest is this: that he is a person made necessary to our intercourse with God, without being

necessary or beneficial to us morally,—an unreasonable, unmoral, spiritual necessity.” He did not mean, of course, that the priest might not have all the qualities which would recommend him as a teacher or as a man, but that he had a special power, quite independent of his personal character, which could act, as it were, mechanically; that out of him went a virtue, as from the hem of his Master’s raiment, to those with whom his sacred office brought him in contact.

It was a great comfort to poor helpless human beings to have a tangible personality of like nature with themselves as a mediator between them and the heavenly powers. Sympathy can do much for the sorrowing, the suffering, the dying, but to hear God himself speaking directly through human lips, to feel the touch of a hand which is the channel of communication with the unseen Omnipotent, this was and is the privilege of those who looked or look up to a priesthood. It has been said, and those who have walked the hospitals or served in the dispensaries can bear witness to the truth of the assertion, that the Roman Catholics know how to die. The same thing is less confidently to be said of Protestants. How frequently is the story told of the most exemplary Protestant Christians, nay, how common is it to read in the lives of the most exemplary Protestant ministers, that they were beset with doubts and terrors in their last days! The blessing of the *viaticum* is unknown to them. Man is essentially an idolater,—that is, in bondage to his imagination,—for there is no more harm in the Greek word *eidolon* than in the Latin word *imago*. He wants a visible image to fix his thought, a scarabee or a *crux ansata*, or the modern symbols which are to our own time what these were to the ancient Egyptians. He wants a vicegerent of the Almighty to take his dying hand and bid him godspeed on his last journey. Who but such an immediate representative of the Divinity would have dared to say to the monarch just laying his head on the block, “*Fils de Saint Louis, monte au ciel*”?

It has been a long and gradual process to thoroughly republi-  
canize the American Protestant descendant of the ancient priesthood. The history of the Congregationalists in New England would show us how this change has gone on, until we have seen the church become a hall open to all sorts of purposes, the pulpit come down to the level of the rostrum, and the clergyman take on the character of a popular lecturer who deals with every kind of subject, including religion.

Whatever fault we may find with many of their beliefs, we have a right to be proud of our pilgrim and puritan fathers among the clergy. They were ready to do and to suffer anything for their faith, and a faith which breeds heroes is better than an unbelief which leaves nothing worth being a hero for. Only let us be fair, and not defend the creed of Mohammed because it nurtured brave men and enlightened scholars, or refrain from condemning polygamy in our admiration of the indomitable spirit and perseverance of the pilgrim fathers of Mormonism, or justify an inhuman belief, or a cruel or foolish superstition, because it was once held or acquiesced in by men whose nobility of character we heartily recognize. The New England clergy can look back to a noble record, but the pulpit has sometimes required a homily from the pew, and may sometimes find it worth its while to listen to one even in our own days.

From the settlement of the country to the present time, the ministers have furnished the highest type of character to the people among whom they have lived. They have lost to a considerable extent the position of leaders, but if they are in our times rather to be looked upon as representatives of their congregations, they represent what is best among those of whom they are the speaking organ. We have a right to expect them to be models as well as teachers of all that makes the best citizens for this world and the next, and they have not been, and are not in these later days, unworthy of their high calling. They have worked hard for small earthly compensation. They have been the most learned men the country had to show, when learning was a scarce commodity. Called by their consciences to self-denying labors, living simply, often half-supported by the toil of their own hands, they have let the light, such light as shone for them, into the minds of our communities as the settler's ax let the sunshine into their log-huts and farm-houses.

Their work has not been confined to their professional duties, as a few instances will illustrate. Often, as was just said, they toiled like day-laborers, teasing lean harvests out of their small inclosures of land,—for the New England soil is not one that “laughs when tickled with a hoe,” but rather one that sulks when appealed to with that persuasive implement. The father of the eminent Boston physician whose recent loss is so deeply regretted, the Reverend Pitt Clarke, forty-two years pastor of the small fold in the town of Norton, Massachusetts, was a typical

example of this union of the two callings, and it would be hard to find a story of a more wholesome and useful life, within a limited and isolated circle, than that which the pious care of one of his children commemorated. Sometimes the New England minister, like worthy Mr. Ward, of Stratford-on-Avon, in old England, joined the practice of medicine to the offices of his holy profession. Michael Wigglesworth, the poet of "The Day of Doom," and Charles Chauncy, the second president of Harvard College, were instances of this twofold service. In politics their influence has always been felt, and in many cases their drums ecclesiastic have beaten the reveillé as vigorously, and to as good purpose, as it ever sounded in the slumbering camp. Samuel Cooper sat in council with the leaders of the Revolution in Boston. The three Northampton-born brothers Allen, Thomas, Moses, and Solomon, lifted their voices, and, when needed, their armed hands, in the cause of liberty. In later days, Elijah Parish and David Osgood carried politics into their pulpits as boldly as their antislavery successors have done in times still more recent.

The learning, the personal character, the sacredness of their office, tended to give the New England clergy of past generations a kind of aristocratic dignity, a personal grandeur, much more felt in the days when class distinctions were recognized less unwillingly than at present. Their costume added to the effect of their bodily presence, as the old portraits illustrate for us, as those of us who remember the last of the "fair, white, curly" wigs, as it graced the imposing figure of the Reverend Dr. Marsh, of Wethersfield, Connecticut, can testify. They were not only learned in the history of the past, but they were the interpreters of prophecy, and announced coming events with a confidence equal to that with which the weather-bureau warns us of a coming storm. The numbers of the book of Daniel and the visions of the Revelation were not too hard for them. In the commonplace book of the Reverend Joel Benedict is to be found the following record, made, as it appears, about the year 1773: "Conversing with Dr. Bellamy upon the downfall of Antichrist, after many things had been said upon the subject, the Doctor began to warm, and uttered himself after this manner: 'Tell your children to tell their children that in the year 1866 something notable will happen in the church; tell them the old man says so.'"

"The old man" came pretty near hitting the mark, as we shall see if we consider what took place in the decade from 1860 to 1870. In 1864, the Pope issued the "Syllabus of Errors," which "must be considered by Romanists as an infallible official document, and which arrays the papacy in open war against modern civilization and civil and religious freedom." The Vatican Council in 1870 declared the Pope to be the bishop of bishops, and immediately after this began the decisive movement of the party known as the "Old Catholics." In the exact year looked forward to by the New England prophet, 1866, the evacuation of Rome by the French and the publication of "Ecce Homo" appear to be the most remarkable events having special relation to the religious world. Perhaps the National Council of the Congregationalists, held at Boston in 1865, may be reckoned as one of the occurrences which the oracle just missed.

The confidence, if not the spirit of prophecy, lasted down to a later period. "In half a century," said the venerable Dr. Porter, of Conway, New Hampshire, in 1822, "there will be no Pagans, Jews, Mohammedans, Unitarians, or Methodists." The half-century has more than elapsed, and the prediction seems to stand in need of an extension, like many other prophetic utterances.

The story is told of David Osgood, the shaggy-browed old minister of Medford, that he had expressed his belief that not more than one soul in two thousand would be saved. Seeing a knot of his parishioners in debate, he asked them what they were discussing, and was told that they were questioning which of the Medford people was the elected one, the population being just two thousand, and that opinion was divided whether it would be the minister or one of his deacons. The story may or may not be literally true, but it illustrates the popular belief of those days, that the clergyman saw a good deal farther into the councils of the Almighty than his successors would claim the power of doing.

The objects about me, as I am writing, call to mind the varied accomplishments of some of the New England clergy. The face of the Revolutionary preacher, Samuel Cooper, as Copley painted it, looks upon me with the pleasantest of smiles and a liveliness of expression which makes him seem a contemporary after a hundred years experience of eternity. The Plato on this lower shelf bears the inscription: "*Ezra Stiles, 1766. Olim à libris Rev. Jaredis Eliot de Killingworth.*" Both were noted scholars and philosophers. The hand-lens before me was imported, with

other philosophical instruments, by the Reverend John Prince, of Salem, an earlier student of science in the town since distinguished by the labors of the Essex Institute. Jeremy Belknap holds an honored place in that unpretending row of local historians. And in the pages of his "*History of New Hampshire*" may be found a chapter contributed in part by the most remarkable man, in many respects, among all the older clergymen—preacher, lawyer, physician, astronomer, botanist, entomologist, explorer, colonist, legislator in State and national governments, and only not seated on the bench of the supreme court of a territory because he declined the office when Washington offered it to him. This manifold individual was the minister of Hamilton, a pleasant little town in Essex County, Massachusetts,—the Reverend Manasseh Cutler. These reminiscences from surrounding objects came up unexpectedly, of themselves, and have a right here, as showing how wide is the range of intelligence in the clerical body thus accidentally represented in a single library making no special pretensions.

It is not so exalted a claim to make for them, but it may be added that they were often the wits and humorists of their localities. Mather Byles's *facetiae* are among the colonial classic reminiscences. But these were, for the most part, verbal quips and quibbles. True humor is an outgrowth of character. It is never found in greater perfection than in old clergymen and old college professors. Dr. Sprague's "*Annals of the American Pulpit*" tells many stories of our old ministers as good as Dean Ramsay's "*Scottish Reminiscences*." He has not recorded the following, which is to be found in Miss Larned's excellent and most interesting history of Windham County, Connecticut. The Reverend Josiah Dwight was the minister of Woodstock, Connecticut, about the year 1700. He was not old, it is true, but he must have caught the ways of the old ministers. The "sensational" pulpit of our own time could hardly surpass him in the drollery of its expressions. A specimen or two may dispose the reader to turn over the pages which follow in a good-natured frame of mind. "If unconverted men ever got to heaven," he said, "they would feel as uneasy as a shad up the crotch of a white-oak." Some of his ministerial associates took offense at his eccentricities, and called on a visit of admonition to the offending clergyman. "Mr. Dwight received these reproofs with great meekness, frankly acknowledged his faults, and promised

amendment, but, in prayer at parting, after returning thanks for the brotherly visit and admonition, 'hoped that they might so hitch their horses on earth that they should never kick in the stables of everlasting salvation.'

It is a good thing to have some of the blood of one of these old ministers in one's veins. An English bishop proclaimed the fact before an assembly of physicians the other day that he was not ashamed to say that he had a son who was a doctor. Very kind that was in the bishop, and very proud his medical audience must have felt. Perhaps he was not ashamed of the gospel of Luke, "the beloved physician," or even of the teachings which came from the lips of one who was a carpenter, and the son of a carpenter. So a New-Englander, even if he were a bishop, need not be ashamed to say that he consented to have an ancestor who was a minister. On the contrary, he has a right to be grateful for a probable inheritance of good instincts, a good name, and a bringing up in a library where he bumped about among books from the time when he was hardly taller than one of his father's or grandfather's folios. What are the names of ministers' sons which most readily occur to our memory as illustrating these advantages? Edward Everett, Joseph Stevens Buckminster, Ralph Waldo Emerson, George Bancroft, Richard Hildreth, James Russell Lowell, Francis Parkman, Charles Eliot Norton, were all ministers' boys. John Lothrop Motley was the grandson of the clergyman after whom he was named. George Ticknor was next door to such a descent, for his father was a deacon. This is a group which it did not take a long or a wide search to bring together.

Men such as the ministers who have been described could not fail to exercise a good deal of authority in the communities to which they belonged. The effect of the Revolution must have been to create a tendency to rebel against spiritual dictation. Republicanism levels in religion as in everything. It might have been expected, therefore, that soon after civil liberty had been established there would be conflicts between the traditional authority of the minister and the claims of the now free and independent congregation. So it was, in fact, as for instance in the case which follows, for which the reader is indebted to Miss Larned's book, before cited:

The ministerial veto allowed by the Saybrook Platform gave rise, in the year 1792, to a fierce conflict in the town of Pomfret,



Connecticut. Zephaniah Swift, a lawyer of Windham, came out in the Windham "Herald," in all the vehemence of partisan phraseology, with all the emphasis of italics and small capitals. Was it not time, he said, for people to look about them and see whether "*such despotism was founded in Scripture, in reason, in policy, or on the rights of man!* A minister, by his *vote*, by his *single voice*, may negative the unanimous vote of the *church!* Are ministers composed of *finer clay* than the rest of mankind, that entitles them to this preëminence? Does a license to preach transform a man into a higher order of beings and endow him with a natural quality to govern? Are the laity an inferior order of beings, fit only to be *slaves* and to be *governed*? Is it good policy for mankind to subject themselves to *such degrading vassalage and abject submission*? Reason, common sense, and the Bible, with united voice, proclaim to all mankind that they are all born *free and equal*; that every member of a church or Christian congregation must be on the same footing in respect of church government, and that the CONSTITUTION, which delegates to *one* the power to negative the vote of all the rest, is SUBVERSIVE OF THE NATURAL RIGHT OF MANKIND AND REPUGNANT TO THE WORD OF GOD."

The Reverend Mr. Welch replied to the lawyer's attack, pronouncing him to be "destitute of delicacy, decency, good manners, sound judgment, honesty, manhood, and humanity; a poltroon, a cat's-paw, the infamous tool of a party, a partisan, a political weather-cock, and a ragamuffin."

No Fourth-of-July orator would in our day rant like the lawyer, and no clergyman would use such language as that of the Reverend Moses Welch. The clergy have been pretty well republicanized within the last two or three generations, and are not likely to provoke quarrels by assertion of their special dignities or privileges. The public is better bred than to carry on an ecclesiastical controversy in terms which political brawlers would hardly think admissible. The minister of religion is generally treated with something more than respect; he is allowed to say undisputed what would be sharply controverted in anybody else. Bishop Gilbert Haven, of happy memory, had been discussing a religious subject with a friend who was not convinced by his arguments. "Wait till you hear me from the pulpit," he said; "there you cannot answer me." The preacher—if I may use an image which would hardly have suggested itself to him—has

his hearer's head in chancery, and can administer punishment *ad libitum*. False facts, false reasoning, bad rhetoric, bad grammar, stale images, borrowed passages, if not borrowed sermons, are listened to without a word of comment or a look of disapprobation.

One of the ablest and most conscientiously laborious of our clergymen has ventured to question in these pages whether all his professional brethren invariably gave utterance to their sincerest beliefs, and has been sharply criticised for so doing. The layman, who sits silent in his pew, has his rights when out of it, and among them is the right of questioning that which has been addressed to him from the privileged eminence of the pulpit, or in any way sanctioned by his religious teacher. It is nearly two hundred years since a Boston layman wrote these words: "I am not ignorant that the pious frauds of the ancient, and the inbred fire (I do not call it pride) of many of our modern divines, have precipitated them to propagate and maintain truth as well as falsehoods, in such an unfair manner as has given advantage to the enemy to suspect the whole doctrine these men have profest to be nothing but a mere trick."

So wrote Robert Calef, the Boston merchant, whose book the Reverend Increase Mather, president of Harvard College, burned publicly in the college yard. But the pity of it is that the layman had not cried out earlier and louder, and saved the community from the horror of those judicial murders for witchcraft, the blame of which was so largely attributable to the clergy.

Perhaps no laymen have given the clergy more trouble than the doctors. The old reproach against physicians, that where there were three of them together there were two atheists, had a real significance, but not that which was intended by the sharp-tongued ecclesiastic who first uttered it. Undoubtedly there is a strong tendency in the pursuits of the medical profession to produce disbelief in that figment of tradition and diseased human imagination which has been installed in the seat of divinity by the priesthood of cruel and ignorant ages. It is impossible, or, at least, very difficult, for a physician who has seen the perpetual efforts of Nature—whose diary is the book he reads oftenest—to heal wounds, to expel poisons, to do the best that can be done under the given conditions,—it is very difficult for him to believe in a world where wounds cannot heal, where opiates cannot give a respite from pain, where sleep never comes with its

sweet oblivion of suffering, where the art of torture is the only science cultivated, and the capacity for being tormented is the only faculty which remains to the children of that same Father who cares for the falling sparrow. The Deity has often been pictured as Moloch, and the physician has, no doubt, frequently repudiated him as a monstrosity.

On the other hand, the physician has often been renowned for piety as well as for his peculiarly professional virtue of charity,—led upward by what he sees to the source of all the daily marvels wrought before his own eyes. So it was that Galen gave utterance to that psalm of praise which the sweet singer of Israel need not have been ashamed of; and if this “heathen” could be lifted into such a strain of devotion, we need not be surprised to find so many devout Christian worshipers among the crowd of medical “atheists.”

No two professions should come into such intimate and cordial relations as those to which belong the healers of the body and the healers of the mind. There can be no more fatal mistake than that which brings them into hostile attitudes with reference to each other, both having in view the welfare of their fellow-creatures. But there is a territory always liable to be differed about between them. There are patients who never tell their physician the grief which lies at the bottom of their ailments. He goes through his accustomed routine with them, and thinks he has all the elements needed for his diagnosis. But he has seen no deeper into the breast than the tongue, and got no nearer the heart than the wrist. A wise and experienced clergyman, coming to the patient's bedside,—not with the professional look on his face which suggests the undertaker and the sexton, but with a serene countenance and a sympathetic voice, with tact, with patience, waiting for the right moment,—will surprise the shy spirit into a confession of the doubt, the sorrow, the shame, the remorse, the terror which underlies all the bodily symptoms, and the unburdening of which into a loving and pitying soul is a more potent anodyne than all the drowsy sirups of the East. And, on the other hand, there are many nervous and oversensitive natures which have been wrought up by self-torturing spiritual exercises until their best confessor would be a sagacious and wholesome-minded physician.

Suppose a person to have become so excited by religious stimulants that he is subject to what are known to the records of

insanity as hallucinations: that he hears voices whispering blasphemy in his ears, and sees devils coming to meet him, and thinks he is going to be torn in pieces, or trodden into the mire. Suppose that his mental conflicts, after plunging him into the depths of despondency, at last reduce him to a state of *despair*, so that he now contemplates taking his own life, and debates with himself whether it shall be by knife, halter, or poison, and after much questioning is apparently making up his mind to commit suicide. Is not this a manifest case of insanity, in the form known as *melancholia*? Would not any prudent physician keep such a person under the eye of constant watchers, as in a dangerous state of, at least, partial mental alienation? Yet this is an exact transcript of the mental condition of "Christian" in "Pilgrim's Progress," and its counterpart has been found in thousands of wretched lives terminated by the act of self-destruction, which was so nearly taking place in the hero of the allegory. Now the wonderful book from which this example is taken is, next to the Bible and the Treatise of Thomas à Kempis, the best-known religious work of Christendom. If Bunyan and his contemporary, Sydenham, had met in consultation over the case of "Christian" at the time when he was meditating self-murder, it is very possible that there might have been a difference of judgment. The physician would have one advantage in such a consultation. He would pretty certainly have received a Christian education, while the clergyman would probably know next to nothing of the laws or manifestations of mental or bodily disease. It does not seem as if any theological student was really prepared for his practical duties until he had learned something of the effects of bodily derangements, and, above all, had become familiar with the gamut of mental discord in the wards of an insane asylum.

It is a very thoughtless thing to say that the physician stands to the divine in the same light as the divine stands to the physician, so far as each may attempt to handle subjects belonging especially to the other's profession. Many physicians know a great deal more about religious matters than they do about medicine. They have read the Bible ten times as much as they ever read any medical author. They have heard scores of sermons for one medical lecture to which they have listened. They often hear much better preaching than the average minister, for he hears himself chiefly, and they hear abler men and a variety of them. They have now and then been distinguished in theology

as well as in their own profession. The name of Servetus might call up unpleasant recollections, but that of another medical practitioner may be safely mentioned. "It was not till the middle of the last century that the question as to the authorship of the Pentateuch was handled with anything like a discerning criticism. The first attempt was made by a layman, whose studies we might have supposed would scarcely have led him to such an investigation." This layman was "Astruc, doctor and professor of medicine in the Royal College at Paris, and court physician to Louis XIV." The quotation is from the article "Pentateuch" in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," which, of course, lies on the table of the least instructed clergyman. The sacred profession has, it is true, returned the favor by giving the practitioner of medicine Bishop Berkeley's "Treatise on Tar-water," and the invaluable prescription of that "aged clergyman whose sands of life"—but let us be fair, if not generous, and remember that Cotton Mather shares with Zabdiel Boylston the credit of introducing the practice of inoculation into America. The professions should be cordial allies, but the church-going, Bible-reading physician ought to know a great deal more of the subjects included under the general name of theology than the clergyman can be expected to know of medicine. To say, as has been said not long since, that a young divinity student is as competent to deal with the latter as an old physician is to meddle with the former, suggests the idea that wisdom is not an heirloom in the family of the one who says it. What a set of idiots our clerical teachers must have been and be, if, after a quarter or half a century of their instruction, a person of fair intelligence is utterly incompetent to form any opinion about the subjects which they have been teaching, or trying to teach him, so long!

A minister must find it very hard work to preach to hearers who do not believe, or only half believe, what he preaches. But pews without heads in them are a still more depressing spectacle. He may convince the doubter and reform the profligate. But he cannot produce any change on pine and mahogany by his discourses, and the more wood he sees as he looks along his floor and galleries, the less his chance of being useful. It is natural that in times like the present changes of faith and of place of worship should be far from infrequent. It is not less natural that there should be regrets on one side and gratification on the other, when such changes occur. It even happens occasionally

that the regrets become aggravated into reproaches—rarely from the side which receives the new accessions, less rarely from the one which is left. It is quite conceivable that the Roman Church, which considers itself the only true one, should look on those who leave its communion as guilty of a great offense. It is equally natural that a church which considers Pope and Pagan a pair of murderous giants, sitting at the mouth of their caves, alike in their hatred to true Christians, should regard any of its members who go over to Romanism as lost in fatal error. But within the Protestant fold there are many compartments, and it would seem that it is not a deadly defection to pass from one to another.

So far from such exchanges between sects being wrong, they ought to happen a great deal oftener than they do. All the larger bodies of Christians should be constantly exchanging members. All men are born with conservative or aggressive tendencies: they belong naturally with the idol-worshippers or the idol-breakers. Some wear their fathers' old clothes, and some will have a new suit. One class of men must have their faith hammered in like a nail, by authority; another class must have it worked in like a screw, by argument. Members of one of these classes often find themselves fixed by circumstances in the other. The late Mr. Orestes A. Brownson used to preach at one time to a little handful of persons, in a small upper room, where some of them got from him their first lesson about the substitution of reverence for idolatry, in dealing with the books they hold sacred. But after a time Mr. Brownson found he had mistaken his church, and went over to the Roman Catholic establishment, of which he became and remained to his dying day one of the most stalwart champions. Nature is prolific and ambidextrous. While this strong convert was trying to carry us back to the ancient faith, another of her sturdy children, Theodore Parker, was trying just as hard to provide a new church for the future. One was driving the sheep into the ancient fold, while the other was taking down the bars that kept them out of the new pasture. Neither of these powerful men could do the other's work, and each had to find the task for which he was destined.

The "old gospel ship," as the Methodist song calls it, carries many who would steer by the wake of their vessel. But there are many others who do not trouble themselves to look over the stern, having their eyes fixed on the light-house in the distance

before them. In less figurative language, there are multitudes of persons who are perfectly contented with the old formulæ of the church with which they and their fathers before them have been and are connected, for the simple reason that they fit, like old shoes, because they have been worn so long, and mingled with these, in the most conservative religious body, are here and there those who are restless in the fetters of a confession of faith to which they have pledged themselves without believing in it. This has been true of the Athanasian creed, in the Anglican Church, for two centuries more or less, unless the Archbishop of Canterbury, Tenison, stood alone in wishing the church were well rid of it. In fact, it has happened to the present writer to hear the Thirty-nine Articles summarily disposed of by one of the most zealous members of the American branch of that communion, in a verb of one syllable, more familiar to the ears of the fore-castle than to those of the vestry.

But, on the other hand, it is far from uncommon to meet with persons among the so-called "liberal" denominations who are uneasy for want of a more definite ritual and a more formal organization than they find in their own body. Now, the rector or the minister must be well aware that there are such cases, and each of them must be aware that there are individuals under his guidance whom he cannot satisfy by argument, and who really belong by all their instincts to another communion. It seems as if a thoroughly honest, straight-collared clergyman would say frankly to his restless parishioner: "You do not believe the central doctrines of the church which you are in the habit of attending. You belong properly to Brother A's or Brother B's fold, and it will be more manly and probably more profitable for you to go there than to stay with us." And, again, the rolling-collared clergyman might be expected to say to this or that uneasy listener: "You are longing for a church which will settle your beliefs for you, and relieve you to a great extent from the task, to which you seem to be unequal, of working out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Go over the way to Brother C's or Brother D's; your spine is weak, and they will furnish you a back-board which will keep you straight and make you comfortable." Patients are not the property of their physicians, nor parishioners of their ministers.

As for the children of clergymen, the presumption is that they will adhere to the general belief professed by their fathers. But

they do not lose their birthright or their individuality, and have the world all before them to choose their creed from, like other persons. They are sometimes called to account for attacking the dogmas they are supposed to have heard preached from their childhood. They cannot defend themselves, for various good reasons. If they did, one would have to say he got more preaching than was good for him, and came at last to feel about sermons and their doctrines as confectioners' children do about candy. Another would have to own that he got his religious belief, not from his father, but from his mother. That would account for a great deal, for the milk in a woman's veins sweetens, or, at least, dilutes an acrid doctrine, as the blood of the motherly cow softens the virulence of small-pox, so that its mark survives only as the seal of immunity. Another would plead atavism, and say he got his religious instincts from his great-grandfather, as some do their complexion or their temper. Others would be compelled to confess that the belief of a wife or a sister had displaced that which they naturally inherited. No man can be expected to go thus into the details of his family history, and, therefore, it is an ill-bred and indecent thing to fling a man's father's creed in his face, as if he had broken the fifth commandment in thinking for himself in the light of a new generation. Common delicacy would prevent him from saying that he did not get his faith from his father, but from somebody else, perhaps from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, like the young man whom the Apostle cautioned against total abstinence.

It is always the right, and may sometimes be the duty, of the layman to call the attention of the clergy to the short-comings and errors, not only of their own time, but also of the preceding generations, of which they are the intellectual and moral product. This is especially true when the authority of great names is fallen back upon as a defense of opinions not in themselves deserving to be upheld. It may be very important to show that the champions of this or that set of dogmas, some of which are extinct or obsolete as beliefs, while others retain their vitality, held certain general notions which vitiated their conclusions. And in proportion to the eminence of such champions, and the frequency with which their names are appealed to as a bulwark of any particular creed or set of doctrines, is it urgent to show into what obliquities or extravagances or contradictions of thought they have been betrayed.



In summing up the religious history of New England, it would be just and proper to show the agency of the Mathers, father and son, in the witchcraft delusion. It would be quite fair to plead in their behalf the common beliefs of their time. It would be an extenuation of their acts that, not many years before, the great and good magistrate, Sir Matthew Hale, had sanctioned the conviction of prisoners accused of witchcraft. To fall back on the errors of the time is very proper when we are trying our predecessors *in foro conscientie*. The houses they dwelt in may have had some weak or decayed beams and rafters, but they served for their shelter, at any rate. It is quite another matter when those rotten timbers are used in holding up the roofs over our own heads. Still more, if one of our ancestors built on an unsafe or an unwholesome foundation, the best thing we can do is to leave it and persuade others to leave it if we can. And if we refer to him as a precedent, it must be as a warning and not as a guide.

Such was the reason of the present writer's taking up the writings of Jonathan Edwards for examination in a recent essay. The "Edwardsian" theology is still recognized as a power in and beyond the denomination to which he belonged. One or more churches bear his name, and it is thrown into the scale of theological belief as if it added great strength to the party which claims him. That he was a man of extraordinary endowments and deep spiritual nature was not questioned, nor that he was a most acute reasoner who could unfold a proposition into its consequences as patiently, as convincingly, as a palæontologist extorts its confession from a fossil fragment. But it was maintained that so many dehumanizing ideas were mixed up with his conceptions of man, and so many diabolizing attributes embodied in his imagination of the Deity, that his system of beliefs was tainted throughout by them, and that the fact of his being so remarkable a logician recoiled on the premises which pointed his inexorable syllogisms to such revolting conclusions. When he presents us a God, in whose sight children, with certain not too frequent exceptions, "are young vipers, and are infinitely more hateful than vipers"; when he gives the most frightful detailed description of infinite and endless tortures which it drives men and women mad to think of prepared for "the bulk of mankind"; when he cruelly pictures a future in which parents are to sing hallelujahs of praise as they see their children driven into the furnace, where they are

to lie "roasting" forever,—we have a right to say that the man who held such beliefs and indulged in such imaginations and expressions, is a burden and not a support in reference to the creed with which his name is associated. What heathenism has ever approached the horrors of this conception of human destiny? It is not an abuse of language to apply to such a system of beliefs the name of *Christian pessimism*.

If these and similar doctrines are so generally discredited as some appear to think, we might expect to see the change showing itself in catechisms and confessions of faith, to hear the joyful news of relief from its horrors in all our churches, and no longer to read in the newspapers of ministers rejected or put on trial for heresy because they could not accept the most dreadful of these doctrines. Whether this be so or not, it must be owned that the name of Jonathan Edwards does at this day carry a certain authority with it for many persons, so that anything he believed gains for them some degree of probability from that circumstance. It would, therefore, be of much interest to know whether he was trustworthy in his theological speculations, and whether he ever changed his belief with reference to any of the great questions above alluded to.

Some of our readers may remember a story which got abroad many years ago that a certain M. Babinet, a scientific Frenchman of note, had predicted a serious accident soon to occur to the planet on which we live by the collision with it of a great comet then approaching us, or some such occurrence. There is no doubt that this prediction produced anxiety and alarm in many timid persons. It became a very interesting question with them who this M. Babinet might be. Was he a sound observer, who had made other observations and predictions which had proved accurate? Or was he one of those men who are always making blunders for other people to correct? Is he known to have changed his opinion as to the approaching disastrous event?

So long as there were any persons made anxious by this prediction, so long as there was even one who believed that he, and his family, and his nation, and his race, and the home of mankind, with all its monuments, were very soon to be smitten in mid-heaven and instantly shivered into fragments, it was very desirable to find any evidence that this prophet of evil was a man who held many extravagant and even monstrous opinions.

Still more satisfactory would it be if it could be shown that he had reconsidered his predictions, and declared that he could not abide by his former alarming conclusions. And we should think very ill of any astronomer who would not rejoice for the sake of his fellow-creatures, if not for his own, to find the threatening presage invalidated in either or both of the ways just mentioned, even though he had committed himself to M. Babinet's dire belief.

But what is the trivial, temporal accident of the wiping out of a planet and its inhabitants to the infinite catastrophe which shall establish a mighty world of eternal despair? And which is it most desirable for mankind to have disproved or weakened, the grounds of the threat of M. Babinet, or those of the other infinitely more terrible comminations, so far as they rest on the authority of Jonathan Edwards?

The writer of this paper had been long engaged in the study of the writings of Edwards, with reference to the essay he had in contemplation, when, on speaking of the subject to a very distinguished orthodox divine, this gentleman mentioned the existence of a manuscript of Edwards which had been held back from the public on account of some opinions or tendencies it contained, or was suspected of containing. "High Arianism" was the exact expression he used with reference to it. On relating this fact to an illustrious man of science, whose name is best known to botanists, but is justly held in great honor by the orthodox body to which he belongs, it appeared that he, too, had heard of such a manuscript, and the questionable doctrine associated with it in his memory was Sabellianism. It was of course proper in the writer of an essay on Jonathan Edwards to mention the alleged existence of such a manuscript, with reference to which the same caution seemed to have been exercised as that which led the editor of his collected works to suppress the language Edwards had used about children.

This mention led to a friendly correspondence between the writer and one of the professors in the theological school at Andover, and finally to the publication of a brief essay, which, for some reason, had been withheld from publication for more than a century. Its title is "Observations concerning the Scripture Economy of the Trinity and Covenant of Redemption. By Jonathan Edwards." It contains thirty-six pages and a half, each small page having about two hundred words. The pages before

the reader will be found to average about four hundred and twenty-five words. An introduction and an appendix by the editor, Professor Egbert C. Smyth, swell the contents to nearly a hundred pages, but these additions, and the circumstance that it is bound in boards, must not lead us to overlook the fact that the little volume is nothing more than a pamphlet in book's clothing.

A most extraordinary performance it certainly is, dealing with the arrangements entered into by the three persons of the Trinity, in as bald and matter-of-fact language and as commercial a spirit as if the author had been handling the adjustment of a limited partnership between three retail tradesmen. But, lest a layman's judgment might be considered insufficient, the treatise was submitted by the writer to one of the most learned of our theological experts,—the same who once informed a church dignitary, who had been attempting to define his theological position, that he was a Eutychian,—a fact which he seems to have been no more aware of than M. Jourdain was conscious that he had been speaking prose all his life. The treatise appeared to this professor anti-trinitarian, not in the direction of Unitarianism, however, but of Tritheism. Its anthropomorphism affected him like blasphemy, and the paper produced in him the sense of "great disgust," which its whole character might well excite in the unlearned reader.

All this is, however, of little importance, for this is not the work of Edwards referred to by the present writer in his previous essay. The tract recently printed as a volume may be the one referred to by Dr. Bushnell, in 1851, but of this reference by him the writer never heard until after his own essay was already printed. The manuscript of the "Observations" was received by Professor Smyth, as he tells us in his introduction, about fifteen years ago, from the late Reverend William T. Dwight, D. D., to whom it was bequeathed by his brother, the Reverend Dr. Sereno E. Dwight.

But the reference of the present writer was to another production of the great logician, thus spoken of in a quotation from "the accomplished editor of the Hartford 'Courant,'" to be found in Professor Smyth's introduction:

"It has long been a matter of private information that Professor Edwards A. Park, of Andover, had in his possession an unpublished manuscript of Edwards of considerable extent, perhaps two-thirds as long as his treatise on

the will. As few have ever seen the manuscript, its contents are only known by vague reports. . . . It is said that it contains a departure from his published views on the Trinity and a modification of the view of original sin. One account of it says that the manuscript leans toward Sabellianism, and that it even approaches Pelagianism."

It was to this "suppressed" manuscript the present writer referred, and not to the slender brochure recently given to the public. It is necessary, therefore, to say plainly that to satisfy inquirers who may be still in doubt with reference to Edwards's theological views, it would be necessary to submit this manuscript, and all manuscripts of his which have been kept private, to their inspection, in print, if possible, so that all could form their own opinion about it or them.

The whole matter may be briefly stated thus: Edwards believed in an eternity of unimaginable horrors for "the bulk of mankind." His authority counts with many in favor of that belief, which affects great numbers as the idea of ghosts affected Madame de Staël: "*Je n'y crois pas, mais je les crains.*" This belief is one which it is infinitely desirable to the human race should be shown to be possibly, probably, or certainly erroneous. It is, therefore, desirable in the interest of humanity that any force the argument in its favor may derive from Edwards's authority should be weakened by showing that he was capable of writing most unwisely, and if it should be proved that he changed his opinions, or ran into any "heretical" vagaries, by using these facts against the validity of his judgment. That he was capable of writing most unwisely has been sufficiently shown by the recent publication of his "Observations." Whether he anywhere contradicted what were generally accepted as his theological opinions, or how far he may have lapsed into heresies, the public will never rest satisfied until it sees and interprets for itself everything that is open to question which may be contained in his yet unpublished manuscripts. All this is not in the least a personal affair with the writer, who, in the course of his studies of Edwards's works, accidentally heard, from the unimpeachable sources sufficiently indicated, the reports, which it seems must have been familiar to many, that there was unpublished matter bearing on the opinions of the author through whose voluminous works he had been toiling. And if he rejoiced even to hope that so wise a man as Edwards has been considered, so good a man as he is recognized to have been, had, possibly in his changes of opinion, ceased to think of children as vipers, and of parents as shouting

hallelujahs while their lost darlings were being driven into the flames, where is the theologian who would not rejoice to hope so with him, or who would be willing to tell his wife or his daughter that he did not?

The real, vital division of the religious part of our Protestant communities is into Christian optimists and Christian pessimists. The Christian optimist in his fullest development is characterized by a cheerful countenance, a voice in the major key, an undisguised enjoyment of earthly comforts, and a short confession of faith. His theory of the universe is progress; his idea of God is that he is a Father with all the true paternal attributes, of man that he is destined to come into harmony with the key-note of divine order, of this earth that it is a training-school for a better sphere of existence. The Christian pessimist in his most typical manifestation is apt to wear a solemn aspect, to speak, especially from the pulpit, in the minor key, to undervalue the lesser enjoyments of life, to insist on a more extended list of articles of belief. His theory of the universe recognizes this corner of it as a moral ruin; his idea of the Creator is that of a ruler whose pardoning power is subject to the veto of what is called "justice"; his notion of man is that he is born a natural hater of God and goodness, and that his natural destiny is eternal misery. The line dividing these two great classes zigzags its way through the religious community, sometimes following denominational layers and cleavages, sometimes going, like a geological fracture, through many different strata. The natural antagonists of the religious pessimists are the men of science, especially the evolutionists, and the poets. It was but a conditioned prophecy, yet we cannot doubt what was in Milton's mind when he sang, in one of the divinest of his strains, that

"Hell itself will pass away,  
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day."

And Nature, always fair if we will allow her time enough, after giving mankind the inspired tinker who painted the Christian's life as that of a hunted animal, "never long at ease," desponding, despairing, on the verge of self-murder,—painted it with an originality, a vividness, a power and a sweetness, too, that rank him with the great authors of all time,—kind Nature, after this gift, sent as his counterpoise the inspired plowman, whose songs have done more to humanize the

hard theology of Scotland than all the rationalistic sermons that were ever preached. Our own Whittier has done and is doing the same thing, in a far holier spirit than Burns, for the inherited beliefs of New England and the country to which New England belongs. Let me sweeten these closing paragraphs of an essay not meaning to hold a word of bitterness with a passage or two from the lay-preacher who is listened to by a larger congregation than any man who speaks from the pulpit. Who will not hear his words with comfort and rejoicing when he speaks of "that larger hope which, secretly cherished from the times of Origen and Duns Scotus to those of Foster and Maurice, has found its fitting utterance in the noblest poem of the age"?

It is Tennyson's "In Memoriam" to which he refers, and from which he quotes four verses, of which this is the last:

"Behold! we know not anything:  
I can but trust that good shall fall  
At last,—far off,—at last, to all,  
And every winter change to spring."

If some are disposed to think that the progress of civilization and the rapidly growing change of opinion renders unnecessary any further effort to humanize "the Gospel of dread tidings"; if any believe the doctrines of the Longer and Shorter Catechism of the Westminster divines are so far obsolete as to require no further handling; if there are any who think these subjects have lost their interest for living souls ever since they themselves have learned to stay at home on Sundays with their cakes and ale instead of going to meeting,—not such is Mr. Whittier's opinion, as we may infer from his recent beautiful poem, "The Minister's Daughter." It is not science alone that the old Christian pessimism has got to struggle with, but the instincts of childhood, the affections of maternity, the intuitions of poets, the contagious humanity of the philanthropists,—in short, human nature and the advance of civilization. The pulpit has long helped the world, and is still one of the chief defenses against the dangers that threaten society, and it is worthy now, as it always has been in its best representation, of all love and honor. But many of its professed creeds imperatively demand revision, and the pews which call for it must be listened to, or the preacher will by and by find himself speaking to a congregation of bodiless echoes.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.